

IN DEPTH EXTRA



DECK FASTENERS

DEMAND FOR EFFICIENCY DRIVES INNOVATION.

THEY'RE OFTEN OVERLOOKED, BUT THE RIGHT DECK FASTENERS ARE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL DECK PROJECT. NO MATTER THE MATERIAL A BUILDER USES, THE WRONG FASTENERS CAN RUIN ANY OUTDOOR LIVING PROJECT.

"Many of the popular decking and siding products now offer 50-year and lifetime warranties, so how those products are fastened makes all the difference to the contractor and homeowner," says Maze Nails Marketing Director Kim Pohl. "Remodelers and builders look to their lumberyards for expert advice on best practices for applying building products."

Dealers play an important role in making sure their customers select the right product.

"One of the more common misconceptions is that all fasteners are created equal, that a nail is just a nail and a screw is just a screw," says Simpson Strong-Tie Product Marketing Manager Robert Shirley. "It's important to select a fastener material and/or a coating suitable for the intended application, the materials selected, and the environment. Failing to consider the impact of the local environment, in particular, can lead to problems."

Simpson Strong-Tie has recently introduced several new products for the decking market.

Its new Deck-Drive DCU screw plugs allow contractors to install decking without visible screw heads, leaving a clean, professional finish.

"The plugs are made from popular decking and trim materials for an exact color and grain match, are designed for use with our Deck-Drive DCU Composite screws, and can be installed either by hand or with the labor-saving Quik Drive auto-feed screw driving system," Shirley says.

The Simpson Strong-Tie Deck-Drive DSV Wood screw and DCU Composite screw are both available collated for use with the Quik Drive PRO300S decking system. The DSV Wood decking screw features a variable thread design that reduces torque, making it Simpson Strong-Tie's easiest screw to install into wood decking. It's available in tan, red and gray, and in lengths ranging from 1-1/4" to 4". The 2-3/4" DCU Composite screw can be used in both composites and PVC decking products

and is available in 11 colors. Simpson Strong-Tie also has redesigned the EB-TY Hidden Deck-Fastening System by integrating a stainless-steel reinforcing plate to provide additional hold-down and pull-through capacity for the fastener, maintaining a secure connection when seasonal contraction and expansion occur.

TIME-SAVINGS KEY

With a labor shortage that shows no signs of abating, it's more important than ever that deck fasteners be easy to use and quick to install. Those twin desires are the impetus behind many of the new fastener products on the market.

"We talked to contractors and we said, what kind of products do you need? What do you need out there?" says Greg Palmer, National Nail Corp. marketing director. "And they said, 'Well, first of all, we need something that's really fast. It's got to save us time.' Because with the labor shortage that's going on right now they need something that's really fast that they can go from job to job to job."

Contractors also want a product that's easy to use and is affordable. The new CAMO Drive standup tool from

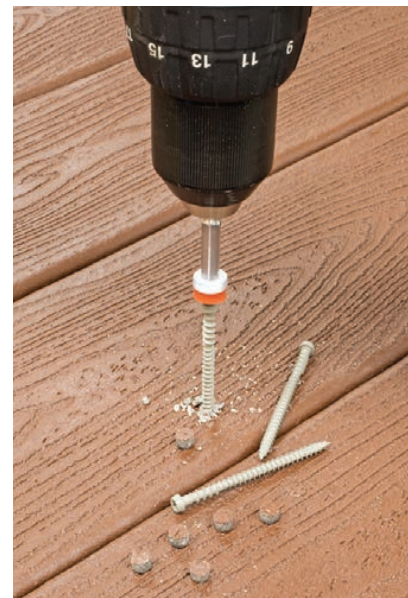
National Nail Corp. is designed to meet those needs and can handle edge, clip and face fastening, all with the contractor's own drill, Palmer says.

"The way we're marketing it is you can install your deck up to five times faster," Palmer says. "It's crazy fast. We had some contractors come in and see the product and their jaws dropped. They said they'd never seen anything move so quickly, especially with clips, because clips are so cumbersome anyway." ➤

OPPOSITE PAGE: The new CAMO Drive stand-up tool from National Nail Corp. can perform collated fastening edge, clip and face-fastening, allowing contractors to install decks up to five times faster, the company says.

BELOW LEFT: The MiTek Pro Series Washer Head is an alternative to traditional lag screws and through-bolts. It is said to be easy to install and reduces labor on the jobsite. The large, flat washer head allows for less interference after installation.

BELOW: Simpson Strong-Tie's new Deck-Drive DCU Composite screw can be used in both composite and PVC decking products. It's available in 11 colors and a length of 2-3/4".



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— ROBERT SHIRLEY, SIMPSON STRONG-TIE

National Nail has introduced two new clips in conjunction with the CAMO Drive. The Edge Clip, for 90-degree decking patterns, hugs the joist and requires no partial drilling. For builders who choose not to use the CAMO Drive, every pail of Edge Clips comes with the “Never Miss Guide” to guide the drill head and allow quick installation. The new Edge X Clip hugs the inside of the grooved deck board and works for any angle.

“We also had these clips tested by an independent company against our competitor’s clips [and] our clips are 88% stronger than theirs,” Palmer says. “That’s the other argument people have had about clips, is you put them down and then the board would slide and move. These won’t move. There’s a little gusset that digs into the groove of the deck board that holds them in place.”

GRK’s next generation of its R4 multipurpose framing and decking screw has also been redesigned to improve contractor productivity, with a nod toward the tight market for skilled labor.

“Anything we can do from a product perspective to ensure that the product is installed quickly and with quality, so that [contractors] don’t have to come back to it, after it’s been installed,” says Jacek Romanski, marketing director, ITW Construction – Residential and Renovation. “That is what we’ve been identifying as a big trend in the marketplace.”

The new R4 includes several features designed to boost productivity: a fast-bite tip to eliminate the need for pre-drilling; a precision-fit star bit head to reduce wobbling and eliminate the need to hold the fastener; a W-cut to reduce installation torque; and optimized thread length to improve clamping force and drawing power.

When The Phillips Screw Company was getting ready to launch a new line of deck fasteners, it talked to contractors and identified three major frustrations with those on the market: slow starting, slow driving, and dropped screws. The company’s new Lightning line of deck fasteners is designed to address all three of those problems, says Todd Ruehs, vice president of business development and brand strategy.

“When you think about those three problems, they all have to do with speed,” Ruehs says. “If a guy drops a screw and he has to keep going back into his belt, he’s wasting time. If he’s having a screw that sits there and spins before it catches, he’s wasting time. If it takes a long time to drive it, he’s wasting time. Time is what he doesn’t have right now.”

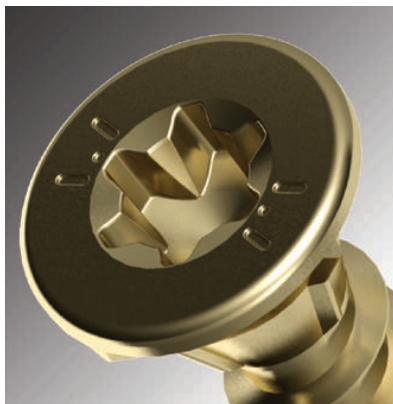
Lightning screws feature six points of innovation, including the patented non-magnetic, Stick-Tight drive system to stop dropped screws and allow one-handed installation. With Stick-Tight, a precision-engineered bit matches the recess for a stable interaction between the bit and screw.

The company also created low-energy threads designed to start faster and drive more quickly than a traditional thread, a super sharp instant-start tip, and threads that roll all the way to the tip for faster starts, under-head ribs for perfect countersinking, and upper and lower threads for a strong plank to joist bond. ➤

RIGHT: The Lightning decking screw from The Phillips Screw Company features six points of innovation: a Stick-Tight drive, low-energy threads, a super sharp instant-start tip, threads that roll all the way to the tip, under-head, and upper and lower threads for a strong plank to joist bond.

BELOW: Grabber developed the new UltraPro screws to help take the hassle out of driving screws so contractors can concentrate on the job.

BELOW RIGHT: GRK redesigned the R4 to provide professionals increased speed for improved productivity, with several new features: a fast-bite tip, a precision-fit star bit head, a W-cut and optimized thread length.



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ABOVE: The new SPAX USA exterior/deck screws feature HCR-X coating, which is code recognized for use in pressure-treated lumber and has been tested for use in coastal building condition 4.

BELOW: The proprietary U2 Gold coating consists of a multi-layered coating with multiple films, formed by thin layers of a silver base and golden top coating.



ABOVE RIGHT: Maze's hot-dipped fasteners have a thick coating of zinc on the nails said to provide long-term rust-resistance.

RIGHT: The Huttig-Guard Platinum series offers a lifetime limited warranty and features a star drive, type 17 point, double countersink flat head and knurled shank.

Another new fastener designed with ease of use in mind is the new UltraPro Wood Screw from Grabber Construction Products. The UltraPro is designed to be best-in-class in each of six areas: Ease and speed of driving, ability to draw wood members together, flush seating, shear strength, corrosion resistance, exterior and interior options, and drive time.

Featuring the proprietary Grabber LOX recess, the UltraPro screw has eight points of contact with the drill bit, while the QuickGrab type 17 point makes for an easier start with no pre-drilling. The screw's lower Ultra-Cut threads reduce the pressure needed to keep the screw engaged and the upper DrawTite threads draw the wood together.

Code changes are also prompting new products in the fastener market.

"The U2 Construction Screw is the next generation of construction screws that are replacing lag screws," says U2 Fasteners President Uli Walther.

The U2 Construction Screws are available in lengths from 1-1/2" to 20" made of hardened steel, and in lengths

from 2-1/2" to 6" made of 316 Marine Grade Stainless Steel. The screws are structural & ACQ treated lumber code compliant in IAPMO report ER-454.

U2 added more than 40 types and sizes of fasteners in 2018, and is always innovating, Walther says.

"Our proprietary U2 Gold coating consists of a multi-layered coating with multiple films, formed by thin layers of a silver base and a golden top coating," he says. "The coating material does not contain any Chrome 6 or other chemical amounts listed on California Proposition 65. Chrome 6 is a common ingredient in corrosion-resistant fasteners and we found a way to be code compliant with AC257 without the chemicals known to cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive harm."

Building codes are also driving the demand for hot-dipped galvanized nails versus electro-galvanized nails, Pohl says.

"Hot-dipped fasteners are preferred because of the long-term rust resistance they provide with the thick coating of zinc on the nails," she says. "Electro-galvanized nails have the thinnest coating of zinc and are not recommended for most exterior building applications."

Maze is the exclusive manufacturer of double hot-dipped galvanized nails, marketed under the Stormguard name.

"Builders and remodelers can be assured that when they use Maze they are getting top-quality nails all proudly made in the U.S.," Pohl says. "Maze is one of the last remaining mills still making nails here in our country."

Selling higher-quality products can mean better margins for dealers, something Huttig has tried to capitalize on with its Huttig-Guard Platinum Deck Screw.

"Customers absolutely love it," says Brad Strosahl, vice president, national accounts and Huttig Xpress. "It's not a huge upcharge in cost, but it's an up-sell for them for their contractors and their contractors are loving it. They are selling a better screw at a higher price and making more margin and having happier customers."

The screw has several benefits for the contractor as well. >





The Deckorators Stowaway Hidden Fastener discretely secures deck boards to joists with a single stainless steel, color-matched screw. The Stowaway screw comes preloaded, making the installation process faster, the company says. Deck boards are automatically spaced at proper intervals, and the need for predrilling and countersinking are eliminated.

“It’s a star drive bit so it’s got the most positive drive in the market,” Strosahl says. “It’s got a twelve-point contact recess. It’s got a double countersinking head, so the head actually seats inside the wood better than a typical deck screw. It does have the type 17 auger point which is a self-drilling point and the serrated threads. But the biggest benefit is the knurled shank and that knurled shank helps bore out the wood and so there is less drag on a tool when you are driving it in so it drives easier and better and cleaner.”

Huttig’s packaging also offers a benefit to the dealer by making it easier for the customer to find what they are looking for.

“One of the unique features of our package line is the boxes we have and the window on the box,” he says. “We have the biggest window in the market in the boxes and you can actually see what’s inside of the actual product. With other brands, you have to open the box or you see a little window on the side that you really can’t get a full picture of what the full product is. But with our packaging, it really makes it easier for a customer or contractor to choose the right product.”

Screw Products Inc. is also making changes it hopes will help customers better identify and find their products at the dealer with a rebranding effort.

“We’re taking the different product families and we’re branding those families under specific names to make it easier for the consumer to be able to call those screws out, in particular at the store level, to be able to buy them,” says General Manager Steven Wahoviak.

“If we brand that correctly, it just narrows it down to one product family right out of the gate and makes it easier to identify the product. Plus, with our store displays, instead of it all melding into one product, it’s going to differentiate the products on the shelf to make it easier to identify that way as well.”

The five products include four-star drive screws: Axis, a counter-sinking wood decking screw; Epic, a trim head wood decking screw; Pico, a small-head screw that can be used for wood, PVC or composite decking, or concealed fasteners; and Nova, a flathead star drive lag screw. The fifth screw, Yukon, is a hex head lag screw.

As part of the rebranding, Screw Products Inc. will also be updating its product literature and training to highlight specific applications for the fasteners. That information will help dealers better train their salespeople on the uses of each fastener, says President/CEO Jim Miller.

“Product knowledge for the store’s employees is so important, and it enables them to sell so much more,” Miller says. “You go into a box store, nobody knows what it is. You go into a locally owned lumber or hardware store and those employees are educated about the products that they sell. The customer will most likely come back to that store, because they’re going to get the correct answer and walk out with the right product.” ■

Jonathan Sweet is a Minneapolis-based writer and editor who has covered the construction industry for both consumer and trade publications for more than 20 years.

INTERNET INFORMATION

Companies highlighted participated in this article.

DeckWise:
www.deckwise.com

Faspac:
www.fastapscrews.com

FastenMaster:
www.fastenmaster.com

Grabber Construction Products:
www.grabberman.com

GRK Fasteners:
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Huttig Building Products:
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Invisi-Fast:
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Maze Nails:
www.mazenails.com

Midwest Fastener:
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MiTek: Builder Products:
www.mitek-us.com

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